

AN OXEYE SQUALL

BY N. QUAD

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The brig Dolphin of Nantucket, owned and commanded by Captain Abner Bideford, with his wife Mary on board, was making a voyage from Boston to Cadiz. The year was 1784. There had been peace with England for a year, but in granting the colonies their independence the mother country had insisted on the right to search any American vessel in any water and at any time. The pretense was that English subjects were continually deserting his majesty's service and shipping on American craft. It was therefore Captain Bideford's plan to keep clear of any armed vessel flying the British flag. He had a crew of Nantucket men, every one of whom had served in the cause of liberty, and he began worrying about what might happen before he was 200 miles at sea. His wife saw that he was disturbed, and she said:

"Abner, when we left home I do believe that I forgot to fasten the wood shed door."

"What's that to worry about?" he asked.

"Just as much as your fear that we may be overhauled. Let's wait until we see a Britisher bearing down on us before we get dizzy headed."

But Captain Abner had just made his noon observation when a sail was sighted to the eastward. There was a feeling from the first that she was a British man-of-war. Half an hour later all doubts were dispelled. The stranger was not only a man-of-war, but he had changed his course to meet that of the brig.

"I told you so!" exclaimed Captain Abner to Mary as he pointed to the distant sail.

"Yes, Abner; you did," she replied. "And now he'll board and press two or three of the men, even though we haven't got a half a one to spare."

"Waal, it's no use to give up till we have to. I should keep right on and pay no 'tention to him."

There had been a stiff breeze all the forenoon, and the few clouds driving overhead had a squally look to them. Captain Bideford's first idea had been to run away; but, realizing this would provoke curiosity and pursuit, he decided to stand on. As the craft neared each other the man-of-war kept all fast and seemed about to pass on without notice. Of a sudden, however, he fired a solid shot across the brig's bows and hove into the wind.

"That means heave to and be boarded!" shouted Captain Abner as he prepared to give the necessary orders.

"But don't you do anything of the kind!" protested Mary. "He's no more right to stop you than you have to stop him."

"By Josh, then, but he'll blow us out of water!"

"Let him blow! Abner, you're no man if you give up licked to a Britisher who has bin beaten in war!"

The Dolphin held her course. The British captain brought his big craft around in pursuit and opened fire with his bow chasers. When his shot began falling about the brig, Captain Abner and the crew were for bringing her to, but Mary shut her teeth together and grimly said:

"Abner, if you let that Britisher board you before he shoots away a mast I'll not go back home to hear you called a coward."

So the Dolphin held on, though before she got out of range the shot splashed water on her deck. She would have eventually made a clear escape but for loss of the breeze. When it died completely out, the two craft were three miles apart. The man-of-war promptly lowered a boat with an officer and six armed men to pay a visit.

"Waal, you see that boat comin', I s'pose," said Captain Abner as Mary stood beside him. "If you hadn't interfered, I might have got off without anybody bein' taken."

"If I hadn't interfered, you'd have gone back to Nantucket to be sneered at by everybody in town. Jest you watch and wait. It looks bad, but sunthin' may turn up."

The boat came on with long, regular strokes and in half an hour was alongside the brig. The lieutenant in charge came over the rail, followed by three marines with loaded muskets. He had hardly touched the deck when he sang out:

"You impudent blackguard of a Yankee, but why didn't you heave to when we fired a gun?"

"Because we didn't feel like it!" answered Captain Bideford, who had all his coolness now that the crisis was at hand.

"What! What! More impudence? My turkeycock, but you need a lesson in manners. As a beginning I order you to do me that rag!"

"I shall do nothin' of the kind. If you want to make a prize of this brig, go ahead and haul down her flag. If not, then take yourself off."

"Oh, you won't muster your crew, eh?" sneered the lieutenant. "It is as we suspected—too many British deserters aboard! Well, I'll soon weed them out without your help. Here, you Yankees, muster at the mast!"

Had the crew been backed by the captain they would have refused to line up on the deck; but, receiving no encouragement from him to resist, they shambled aft to the mainmast and got in line. They were six able seamen, the mate and cook not being included in the muster. The lieutenant improved five out of the six.

It was an outrage to make his blood

boil, and yet Captain Bideford realized that he was helpless. There was force enough behind the officer to back him up in whatever he wished to do. The lieutenant looked appealingly at the captain, but he turned away in sorrow and despair.

For the last ten minutes Mary Bideford had been watching the sky and the British man-of-war and had been seemingly oblivious of what was going on beside her. She now turned to the captain and quietly said:

"Jest sort of carelessly squint into the southeast and tell me what you see."

"By goah, but it's an oxe-eye squall or I'm no sailor!" whispered Abner after a look.

"That's what it is, and they see it aboard the frigate and have run up a flag of warnin'." The men in the boat can't see it, as they are on the wrong side, and the officer is too busy with his conceit. If we can hold our men ten minutes, we can save them. You go and talk to the mate and post him up, and I'll have a few words with the officer."

The officer was not averse to an argument while waiting, and Mary took care to keep him interested by allowing him to do most of the talking. She was seeking to gain time or ten minutes, and she succeeded. Then three things happened all at once—the impressed men appeared on deck with their bags, the frigate fired a gun, and the squall came roaring down like an angry lion.

It was a miracle that the brig was not dismasted at once. She went over to leeward until her yardarms dipped, and only the loss of a portion of her sails saved her from foundering out of hand. In ten seconds daylight was turned into semidarkness, and there were shouts of terror and despair from every soul on deck. It seemed a long five minutes before the Dolphin lifted herself out of the foam and went flying away before the wind, and as she started the boat which had been alongside with the three marines and four sailors in it was seen floating bottom up.

When the brig had been made snug, Captain Bideford looked about him. Mary was just freeing herself from the lashings which had saved her from going overboard, and not a man of the crew had been lost. What seemed like retribution had overtaken the others, however. The three marines had disappeared, and the lieutenant lay among the spare spars in an unconscious condition. No one looked for the man-of-war. While the fury of the squall was spent after half an hour, it was followed by a breeze which ran the Dolphin below the horizon.

"Waal, Abner," said Mary when things had been straightened out and the unconscious officer had been removed to the cabin for treatment, "mebbe you'll believe in Providence after this."

Early Prejudice Against Potatoes.

The way of the potato was said to have been barred by the prejudice that it was never mentioned in the Bible. In the Lothians it came in about 1740, the year of the famine, from Ireland, but was confined to gardens till about 1754, when it was planted in fields about Aberlady. By the close of the century it was a general article of diet.

Ramsay says that George Henderson went about 1750 for a bag of potatoes to Kilsyth, where the Irish method of field culture had lately been tried, and introduced the potato into Menstrie, where a few had been known, but only in kale yards. The old folks, however, did not take kindly to the new food. Old George Barchop, one of the Ochertyre tenants, when told by his wife that she had potatoes for supper said: "Tatties! Tatties! I never supped on them a' my days and winna the night. Gie them to the herd and get me sowens." It is significant that Burns, who sang the praises of kale and porridge and haggis, should have nothing to say of the potato. —Blackwood's Magazine.

Pantomime Performances.

Most pantomime characters were originally borrowed from the Italians. The first real English pantomime was produced at a theater in Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1720. It was called "Harlequin Executed," and its subtitle was "A New Italian Comic Scene Between a Scaramouche, a Harlequin, a Country Farmer, His Wife and Others." The performance was very successful. About the middle of the eighteenth century the character of pantomime performances was completely altered, chiefly because of the genius of the famous Grimaldi, who made the clown the first figure in the pantomime. Grimaldi first appeared at Sadler's Wells theater, where he played the part of a monkey. He was actively engaged on the stage for forty-nine years, and at the close of his career he took a benefit at Drury Lane theater, which realized nearly \$600. He also received \$100 from the Drury Lane fund. This was in June, 1828. He died in 1837 and was buried in the churchyard of St. James' chapel, Pentonville Hill.

A Sailor's Compliment.

Through all the years they were together Mrs. Jessie Benton Fremont lived for her husband, as before her marriage she had lived for her father. Her brilliant mind, her heart and her hands were constantly busy in her husband's service, and a sailor's compliment shows that her devotion was widely recognized.

During the civil war, when Admiral Porter had command of the Federal fleet on the Mississippi, his flagship was the steamer Benton, named after Mrs. Fremont's father. The admiral named the little tender of the flagship Jessie Benton Fremont, and he wrote to Mrs. Fremont his explanation: "You have always sailed close to your husband and your father."

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Perhaps the most ingenious and the most original of all schemes for procuring autographs was from a lady in a western town. She was raising funds for the building and support of a public library, and she had conceived the idea of issuing a volume to be called "The Authors' Recipe Book." Authors from all over the country, the most distinguished of authors—always authors with a capital A—had been good enough to send her a list of the favorite dishes of their own construction, with their method of making them.

The cookbook was one of the many forms of literature to which the recipient had never turned his attention. He had no more idea of cooking than he had of milking a cow or of harnessing a horse or of setting a hen or of building a dynamo. He did not even care what was cooked for him so long as it contained none of the ingredients of tripe and none of the essence of tomato. But he was asked to contribute a paper, which she would have reproduced in facsimile, stating what he could prepare most to his liking upon a kitchen range or in a chafing dish, with his manner of procedure. This quite nonplused him until he bethought himself of one particular and peculiar delicacy in the evolution of which he could safely trust his reputation as an expert. In reply, for which he received no thanks, he said:

"Take a long paper cutter; attach to the same by means of rubber bands, and securely, an ink eraser; insert the ink eraser firmly into a marshmallow plug and hold the same over a student's lamp or study fire until the marshmallow begins to sizzle, drops into the ashes, puts out the light or burns your hand. And eat while hot!"

He has never seen a copy of "The Authors' Recipe Book"—Laurence Hutton in Critic.

BULGING GUN BARRELS.

The Gun That Is Wrought by Careless Handling.

I have sold guns for ten years, and in that time four of them have had their barrels bulged, one by snow, one by dirt, one by sand and one by something else getting into it. One man crawling through a fence got a little snow in the muzzle. He could not remove it with his finger, so concluded to wait and shoot it out, which he did, but he found a bulge like a pulley's egg on the end of the barrel. Another got some earth in the muzzle and shot it out, and he, too, found the same kind of a bulge on the end of his gun. Another fired his gun at ducks, which knocked him over on his back and fairly got away from him. When he picked up the gun he found a narrow raised band around the barrel fourteen inches from the muzzle. In this case a wad had probably lodged there. This customer thinks the manufacturers ought to give him a new set of barrels. I tell him, if the barrels had not been good ones it would have been a burst instead of a bulge, which might have maimed or killed him. Another map lying on a point brought down a duck with a broken wing which scurried for the water. The man ran and struck the duck with the muzzle of the gun and in so doing got sand in it. He blew most of it out and shot out the rest of it. Well, after that shot he found a little blister two inches from the muzzle about the size of a man's little finger.

Moral.—Do not shoot obstructions of any kind out of your gun if you value your life or gun.—Uncle Dan in Amateur Sportsman.

Something Wanted.

A bachelor, old and cranky, was sitting alone in his room. His toes with the gout were aching, and his face was overspread with gloom, no little ones' shouts to disturb him—from noises the house was free. In fact, from cellar to attic 'twas as still as still could be. No medical aid was lacking; his servants answered his ring, respectfully answered his orders and supplied him with everything. But still there was something wanted, which he could not command—the kindly words of compassion, the touch of a gentle hand. And he said, as his brow grew darker and he rang for the hiring nurse, "Well, marriage may be a failure, but this is a jolly sight worse."

A Water Candlestick.

A glass of water makes a fine emergency candlestick. Weight one end of the candle with a nail just large enough to hold the candle in the water so that the water touches its top edge, but does not touch the wick, and then light the candle. It will burn until the last vestige of wick is gone and the flame will not flicker. The melted tallow that runs down but serves to hold the candle more stationary.—Blacksmith and Wheelwright.

Two Views.

"A man's vote is too precious to be sold," said the patriot.
"Perhaps," answered Senator Sorghum, "although a number of people of my acquaintance regard it as too valuable to be given away."—Washington Star.

A Secret Society.

Carrie—I've got a dandy idea for a girls' secret society. Belle—A secret society? Do you think it would be practical? Carrie—Surely. We wouldn't keep secrets; we'd swap them.—Puck.

Beyond Reason.

There be two individuals who cannot be reasoned with—a girl in love and a man who is determined to run for an office.—New Orleans Picayune.

Love is never afraid of overwork.—Chicago Tribune.

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